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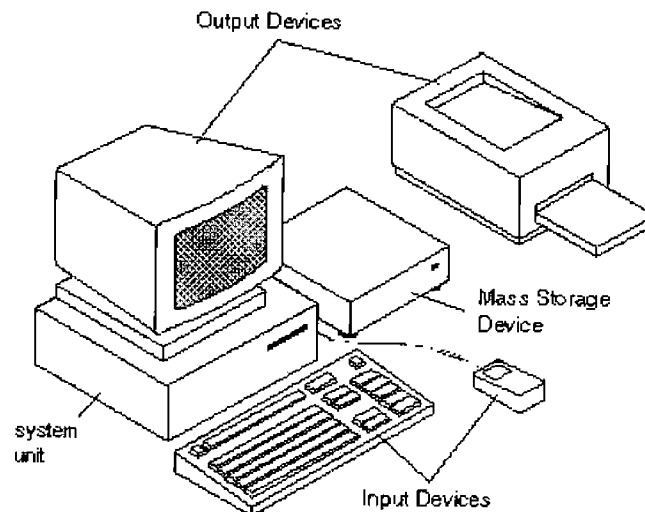Advertising

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computer

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Output Devices

Mass Storage Device

system unit

Input Devices

A programmable machine. The two principal characteristics of a computer are:

- It responds to a specific set of instructions in a well-defined manner.

- It can execute a prerecorded list of instructions (a program).

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Modern computers are electronic and digital. The actual machinery -- wires, transistors, and circuits -- is called *hardware*; the instructions and data are called *software*.

All general-purpose computers require the following hardware components:

- **memory** : Enables a computer to store, at least temporarily, data and programs.
- **mass storage device** : Allows a computer to permanently retain large amounts of data. Common mass storage devices include disk drives and tape drives.
- **input device** : Usually a keyboard and mouse, the input device is the conduit through which data and instructions enter a computer.
- **output device** : A display screen, printer, or other device that lets you see what the computer has accomplished.
- **central processing unit (CPU):** The heart of the computer, this is the component that actually executes instructions.

In addition to these components, many others make it possible for the basic components to work together efficiently. For example, every computer requires a bus that transmits data from one part of the computer to another.

Computers can be generally classified by size and power as follows, though there is considerable overlap:

- **personal computer** : A small, single-user computer based on a microprocessor. In addition to the microprocessor, a personal computer has a keyboard for entering data, a monitor for displaying information, and a storage device for saving data.
- **workstation** : A powerful, single-user computer. A workstation is like a personal computer, but it has a more powerful microprocessor and a higher-quality monitor.
- **minicomputer** : A multi-user computer capable of supporting from 10 to

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hundreds of users simultaneously.
- **mainframe** : A powerful multi-user computer capable of supporting many hundreds or thousands of users simultaneously.
- **supercomputer** : An extremely fast computer that can perform hundreds of millions of instructions per second.

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Webopedia Did You Know - From AT to BTX: Motherboard Form Factors ⋛⋚
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Webopedia's "Did You Know... Preventative Maintenance Tips for Your PC" ⋛⋚
The following tips will serve as a basic guideline to keep your PC maintained to run efficiently, increase component lifespan and also will help lessen the likelihood of PC failure.

What Is 64-bit Computing? ⋛⋚
When reading about PCs and servers, you'll often see the CPU described by the number of bits (e.g., 32-bit or 64-bit), here's a little info about what that means.

IEEE's Computer magazine
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